Awareness of Purpose of Dodd Parties He Attended Is Disclaimed by Johnson

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President Johnson said yesterday he had never knowingly attended a dinner to raise money for the personal use of any public official.

He clearly implied that he was unaware of the nature of the fund-raising dinners and cocktail parties he attended in Connecticut on behalf of Sen. Thomas J. Dodd in 1961 and 1963.

These events produced a reported $100,000 which Dodd considered a tax-free gift, intended to bolster his personal financial situation.

A third affair of this kind—held in Hartford in March, 1965—was reported to have grossed between $90,000 and $100,000 and was also earmarked for Dodd's personal benefit, according to the dinner chairman. The principal speaker was Vice President Humphrey who had assumed its purpose was to raise campaign funds, Humphrey's office has said.

Mr. Johnson's statement—a response to a news conference question inspired by the Dodd case—came amid a series of reports of personal benefit testimonials for various public officials and less than 48 hours after the President had participated in a "testimonial" to House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Thomas E. Morgan (D-Pa.).

The $100-a-plate Morgan dinner attracted 300 people to the Sheraton-Park Hotel Wednesday night. They were drawn, in part, by an expectation that the President would appear.

The dinner celebrated Morgan's 22 years in public life and was arranged by a committee headed by William C. Doherty, former lobbyist for the Postal Clerk's union, Charles Hibbs of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Leo Wright of the Westinghouse Corp.

The proceeds "may be used to give him a painting," said Morgan's assistant, John H. Weiner. "They really haven't made up their minds what to do with it. I don't think they'll give it to him outright because there'd be too damned much income tax."

Morgan was out of the city and unavailable for comment.

The previous night, at the National Democratic Club in the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel, between 1800 and 2000 people paid $25 each to attend a "salute" to Rep. John Blatnik's "Silver Anniversary" as a public official. Blatnik, a Minnesota Democrat, is a

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Johnson Disclaims Dinner Awareness

ROBERT GIAIMO
... given testimonial dinner

ranking member of the House Public Works Committee.

Among those present were Vice President Humphrey, seven cabinet officers, House Speaker John McCormack and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield.

F. Joseph Donohue, the Washington lawyer who served as chairman for the Blatnik party, said the net proceeds would be given to Blatnik to be used at his discretion.

Blatnik said yesterday the fund would be handled by others, a full accounting would be made, and the money would be used to defray campaign and other political expenses.

Still another "testimonial" was held in a New Haven, Conn., suburb on April 12 for Democratic Rep. Robert Giaimo. Giaimo got $35,000 from the dinner. As a gift, said Giaimo, the money is tax-free and will be used to defray political costs other than campaign expenses.

"I gave a cocktail party this week for 200 Democratic women from Connecticut," said Giaimo. "It cost me from $500 to $600. I sent a boy a check for his Bar Mitzvah. I mailed out a newsletter. Those are the things that will be paid out of this fund."

The chairman of the Giaimo dinner was New Haven insurance executive, Arthur Barbieri, who also served as chairman for the $100,000 Dodd dinner in Hartford on March 6, 1965.

Calls it Unfair

"This sounds like a witch hunt," said Barbieri. Singling out Dodd, he said, was "unfair" because "I think the same things could be said about any Senator or Congressman because the same things prevail in the life of any Senator or Congressman."

The Dodd controversy is the product o fcharges by columnists Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson that the Senator failed to pay income taxes on funds diverted from campaign contributions.

Dodd asked the Senate Committee on Standards and Conduct to explore these and other charges but did not reply directly to the columnists.

This week, however, "associates" of the Senator provided The Washington Post with the Senator's defense.

The proceeds from the 1961 and 1963 fund-raising events attended by then Vice President Johnson, they said, were used by the Senator—tax-free because they were in the nature of a gift, rather than campaign contributions.

Discussion Denied

It was reported at that time that this explanation had been provided to the Senate investigating committee. But yesterday both Dodd and the Committee denied that the subject has been discussed.

The Committee said it first learned of the "testimonial" dinners from newspaper accounts. Dodd said he had provided the Committee with no statement on the dinners and has not "authorized any such statement on my behalf."